

5-29-1957

A Foreign Policy for Peace

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "A Foreign Policy for Peace" (1957). *Mike Mansfield Speeches*. 234.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/234

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

For Release A. M.'s, Thursday, May 30, 1957

A FOREIGN POLICY FOR PEACE

Address of Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, Commencement Exercises
College of Great Falls, Great Falls, Montana
8:00 P. M., Wednesday, May 29, 1957

When Monsignor Donovan asked me to deliver the commencement address here at the College of Great Falls, I felt both honored and flattered. When the Monsignor also asked me to receive the honorary Doctorate Degree, I was overwhelmed. It was with a deep sense of gratitude and humility that I accepted.

I wish there were some way, some special honor, some higher degree - some superior mortar board, so to speak - that I might in return bestow upon the Monsignor, not because he needs it more than I but because he deserves it more.

This year, as you may know, is his silver anniversary in the priesthood. Twenty five years of devotion to religion and years of service in the education of the youth of all faiths are ample testimony to his superior worth.

I regret, Monsignor, that I cannot give you a higher degree or a better mortar-board. I can however, express on behalf of all here, the deepest admiration and affection for you for your great contribution to this community. I can also express the hope that your next 25 years will be spent among us so that your magnificent work may go on.

This year is also the Silver Jubilee of the College of Great Falls. The twenty five years of its existence have been years of astonishing growth, for the school, for the city, for the state and the nation. The progress of the College of Great Falls is all the more remarkable since

the school was founded at a time when the nation was in the lowest depths of the Great Depression. For you graduates the Great Depression may be just a title in history. For your parents, however, it is far more than that. They will remember it as a time when colleges, like banks and businesses were busy only at closing their doors. It took courage and faith to establish a school in that climate. The vindication of the courage and faith of the founders of the College of Great Falls is to be seen in this graduating class of 1957.

Since all numbers seem to lead to twenty-five today, I should also note that a quarter of a century ago with the coming to power of Adolph Hitler in Germany, preparations began in earnest for World War II. We did not know it then but less than a decade later the entire world was to be engulfed in a struggle which brought civilization very close to the edge of doom.

The world has now recovered from the material damage of that war. The physical scars have healed even though the personal losses are still felt by those who suffered them. War has become an unpleasant subject for discussion. Many would prefer not to talk about it, just as people preferred not to talk about it in 1932.

Yet the shadow of war still hangs above the earth. The shadow today, moreover, is darker than that which preceded World War II. It is a darker shadow than any in the history of mankind. It is the shadow of a war which threatens not only the Soviet Union and this country but all countries. It is the shadow of a war which threatens not solely civilization but the human race itself; not merely this generation but all generations to come.

I shall not dwell at length, today, on the terrors of this war of the future. You have read of them. You have heard of them. Sufficient to say that each year its potential destructiveness grows larger as atomic weapons are brought to an ever higher state of perfection. We have already reached the point where it is necessary to clear an area three times the size of the State of Montana in order to test a hydrogen bomb. Think of it for a moment. Over 400,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean must be emptied of unprotected shipping before a single explosion can be set off safely. Even then, there must also be a prayer that the winds hold and that there has not been a miscalculation. If we have already reached this state merely in testing nuclear explosives, it is not difficult to imagine what would happen if such explosives were released in actual warfare.

The United States, Soviet Russia and Britain already have these weapons. It will not be long before other nations add them to their arsenals.

And we are only at the beginning. Guided missiles are commencing to replace piloted planes for delivering nuclear explosives in warfare. These missiles now travel several hundred miles with uncanny accuracy. Both Russia and the United States are already experimenting with new models that will speed to targets 1,500 miles away in a matter of minutes. It is only a question of a few years until these devices will have been developed to the point where they will carry nuclear explosives between the continents and reach speeds of 15,000 miles or more per hour in their flight.

This is not science fiction but scientific fact. These are the realities of the world in which we live in this second half of the 20th Century.

It is no wonder that the conscience of humanity has begun to speak out. We have heard it in the words of his Holiness, Pope Pius XII. We have heard it from the depths of Africa in the words of that great missionary, Albert Schweitzer. We have heard it from other religious leaders throughout the world.

The words of each may differ but the message in every case is the same. The warning is clear: Mankind is walking blindly on the brink of an overwhelming catastrophe. There is little margin for error. There is little margin of time.

I said that I would not dwell at length today on the dangers inherent in war and I shall not. What is essential is that we recognize these dangers as very real. What is essential is that we do not close our minds to them as being beyond our comprehension. What is essential is that we seek to understand the problems that these weapons pose for the nation and do what we can to deal with them.

That brings me to the question I wish to discuss with you in detail today. What is the alternative to accepting the inevitability of a nuclear war? The alternative, it seems to me, the only alternative is to work actively for peace.

There is no more important problem facing our state or the nation. It is a problem which has a special significance for you young men and women who are graduating in the year 1957. You will be face to face with this problem through your maturing years. You will work out your dreams, your careers, your lives, under its over-powering influence.

As your Senator, I have given a great deal of thought and time to this question. If he is to serve the citizens of his state, a Senator must be concerned with a Hungry Horse or a Tiber Dam. He must be concerned with the price of wheat or cattle. He must be concerned with the cost of government as it is expressed in the budget and taxes. He must be concerned with the improvement of transportation and communications and the countless other problems of the citizens of the State.

As he considers these domestic matters, however, he is in much the same situation that you young people find yourselves in thinking of your futures. He must consider them in the light of the immense problems of war and peace which face the nation.

The cost of past wars and preparations for defense in the event of another runs to over 80% of the \$71.8 billion budget presented to Congress by the Administration a few months ago. You have heard much, I am sure, of the so-called "Battle of the Budget". Actually, it is more a skirmish than a battle. Congress has done what it can to reduce spending, to increase efficiency. The major costs of government, however, have to do as I noted, with defense costs, with what might be called war-costs. So long as serious threats exist to the security of the nation these are the most difficult costs to reduce.

The questions of war and peace, therefore, are not remote from the interests of the people of this state, or any state. They are at the core of our interests. And because they are, as a Senator, I have been deeply concerned with them. I have travelled widely in the world these past few years in an effort to grasp their implications as fully as possible. I have tried to understand what roads lead to peace, what roads to war.

The way the nation acts for peace is primarily through foreign policy, just as we work to defend ourselves in war through defense policies. A foreign policy is not a mystical formula no one can understand except the President and the Secretary of State, and of which ordinary citizens need stand in awe. In this nation, it is your foreign policy and the more you know about it, the better policy it is likely to be. You will gain if this country has an effective foreign policy. You will suffer incalculably if it is an inadequate policy.

Foreign policy is the course of action we follow as a nation in the world. It is what we do or fail to do in our relations with others to safeguard our national interests. Fifty years ago or even twenty-five, these interests did not appear to be of great consequence. Yet three times in the lives of many here today, they were sufficient to plunge the nation into the deep sorrow and the tremendous losses of great military conflicts.

In the light of these experiences can we believe any longer that the nation's international interests are of little consequence? In the light of these experiences, is it reasonable to assume that if a major conflict breaks out in the world we can avoid it? If we were unable to do so when other nations were more remote from us, when the oceans provided a defense of insulation, are we likely to do so now? Are we likely to do so when technological advances continue to bring nations into ever-closer contact with one another? Are we likely to do so when not only the oceans but even the polar regions have ceased to be a barrier to this contact?

It seems to me that there is only one way in which we can hope to safeguard our over-riding national interest in avoiding an involvement in war. That is by reducing the likelihood of an outbreak of war. It is by

building a positive foreign policy for peace.

A policy of peace is one which first of all, recognizes and is based solidly on the realities that exist in the world. It is one which is adjusted not to conditions as we would like them to be but to conditions as they are. Most important, it is a policy which isolates the principal dangers of war in the world and acts, insofar as it is within our capacity to act, to curb or remove those dangers.

Before I deal with the dangers to peace and the actions that are necessary to cope with them, let me say this about the nature of foreign policy. No matter how effective it may be, peace depends on what others do as well as on what we do. The most that we can expect is that those responsible for our foreign policy assess accurately the situation that exists in the world, that they face this situation honestly and then set a courageous course of action for dealing with it. They can do no more. We can ask for no more.

I have spoken, as you may know, many times in recent years on matters of foreign policy, in the Senate, at home in Montana, and elsewhere. As a result, some have come to regard me as a critic of the Administration's foreign policy. I can assure you, however, that my purpose has not been criticism for the sake of criticism. My purpose has been to impress upon those responsible the common-sense principles of policy I have just mentioned: Assess the international situation accurately; face it honestly; deal with it courageously.

In these terms, a foreign policy for peace requires that first of all we isolate the dangers to peace in the present international situation. When we consider these dangers, most of us think automatically of Soviet Russia. There are sound reasons for this chain of thought although I should like to emphasize that the problem of maintaining peace involves much more than the actions of any single country or any single ideology. The problem has been with the world long before communism was even a word in the language and it may well be with us even after communism is remembered only in history.

At this moment, nevertheless, a major threat to peace does arise from the Soviet Union. That is because Russia is a militant totalitarianism and a powerful totalitarianism. It is the second industrial power of the world and possesses enormous military strength. Moscow is the summit of a worldwide system of power which extends over most of eastern Europe and deep into the heart of Asia. The Russians have allies in the Middle East and support wherever communist parties operate in the world.

Soviet Russia is cut of the same cloth that has characterized all tyrannies. The threat it poses to peace lies basically in the unpredictability of the rulers of the communist system. They are ruthless men and if

they are like Stalin, they are men obsessed with a fear and hatred of freedom. They are men who cannot rest content while people or nations who do not agree with them continue to exist in independence.

The danger to peace arises from the fact that these men - these men without fixed responsibility to their peoples - control vast forces of destruction. They can unleash these forces in a moment of fear, in a moment of miscalculation, in a moment of whim.

Strangely enough the hope that peace shall not give way suddenly in these circumstances lies in the fact that these Soviet rulers are not only ruthless men, they are also intelligent men. They are fully aware of the dangers to themselves as well as to others in modern warfare. They know something of the power of nuclear weapons since they themselves have them and they are fully aware that these weapons are held by the United States and other free nations. They know that if they launch a military aggression it will be met by retaliation. Since such is the case, if they act as intelligent men, they will not invite their own destruction by precipitating a war.

That is not much of a hope for peace. It is a delicate fulcrum on which to balance the fate of civilization. For the moment, however, there is no other. That is one of the realities of the situation which confronts the nation, and we have no choice but to live with it.

There is still another hope, however, a hope for a more durable peace. To realize it, will require endless patience and the deepest wisdom and restraint on our part. This other hope, this long-range hope lies in the fact that the Soviet totalitarianism is no more impervious to change than any other system and changes within the Communist realm could lead in the direction of greater stability, greater responsibility and a more secure peace.

Pressures for change already exist throughout the vast stretch of the Soviet system, from Eastern Europe to the Pacific. There are people living within the communist countries who resent oppression and who resist it. We have seen their influence in developments in Yugoslavia, in Hungary and in Poland. In time, that influence is likely to reveal itself elsewhere in the Soviet system, even within Soviet Russia itself.

What, then, does the situation within the Soviet system add up to in terms of a foreign policy for peace? What attitudes and actions on our part does it suggest? It suggests, first of all, that we cannot underestimate the continued danger of aggression from the Soviet system. It also suggests, however, that if we can do anything to lessen the threat which a potential war with the scientific weapons of today represents to all mankind, we ought to be prepared to do it. We should be prepared to negotiate at any time and at any place and on any matter which relates to the control of this warfare of the future. These negotiations must be pursued not with blind optimism but with all the soberness we can command, with a full awareness that there is no room for false steps or empty promises.

I am confident that we can trust the President of the United States to negotiate in that fashion. It amazes me when people say that the President, our representatives or other Americans cannot talk with the Russians without being contaminated or without getting the worst of the bargain. If we ever reach the point where we fear negotiations on any matter because we believe we are less capable, less competent or more subject to contamination than others, or because we regard ourselves less able to distinguish between what is good or bad for this nation then we shall indeed have reached a sorry state.

To afford immediate protection against war, then, we need a combination of military strength and a willingness to negotiate to reduce the risks of war. For the long-range hope of peace we need to be constantly alert to developments inside the Soviet system. We need to be flexible in our policies for dealing with these developments.

Whenever changes within that system promise to lead to greater freedom and to peace we ought to do what it is prudent to do to encourage these changes. One thing we ought not to do is to stimulate uprisings in any country by incendiary words or promises of liberation and then provide only tears and sympathy to the martyrs to liberty when these uprisings are crushed by brutal power.

Freedom will come to the countries now suppressed by Soviet Russia and even to the people within Soviet Russia. It will come, however, primarily on the initiative of the peoples of these lands. Our words and actions in this connection can be harmful as well as helpful unless they are governed by great wisdom, understanding and restraint.

If I may turn now from the problems posed for foreign policy by the Soviet system, I should like to consider with you another threat to peace. The threat which arises from within the circle of the free nations themselves. Twice in this century the world has been plunged into wholesale conflicts. The origins of World War I and World War II had little to do with Soviet totalitarianism. They were wars which began primarily in Western Europe. They were wars which resulted from the disunity and rivalries of the very nations which are closest to us in culture, in traditions and in outlook. They were wars, in short, which struck at the heart of the free civilizations of the Western world.

World War I dealt a severe blow to the ideals and achievements of Europe. World War II almost brought an end to liberty in Western Europe. It took an enormous effort on the part of the people of that region, great human and financial sacrifices on the part of the people of the United States, to restore that region, to give it one more chance to live again in freedom.

I believe it is the last chance. The countries of Western Europe now have little choice. Either they move towards greater unity or they will once again split apart into the rivalries which characterized them before World War II. They will lay themselves open to a new suicidal conflict and to a long night of totalitarian domination.

In recent years, I have had occasion to talk at length with many of the political leaders of western Europe. Most of them recognize that the hope for the continued freedom of their countries lies in unity. They have done much to overcome the fears and suspicions of centuries, such as those which have characterized German-French relations, and they have moved their countries a long way towards integration. Much remains to be done, however, if the unity of Western Europe is to become a living reality. There is a need to rejoin the two halves of a divided Germany in peace and there is a need for a continued advance in binding together all of Western Europe in common efforts for defense and for economic and scientific progress.

During the past decade this country has done a great deal to contribute to the stability of Western Europe and to encourage its integration. Public funds, funds to which all of us contribute in taxes, were used to bring about economic recovery in the European countries under the Marshall Plan. They have been used through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to promote a common defense against totalitarian aggression.

We have made this contribution because it has been in our national interest to make it. We have made it because, as I suggested earlier, the advances of technology and science have linked our peace with the preservation of peace elsewhere. We have made it because there is no real defense against a major nuclear war except the defense of a strongly maintained peace.

I should like to turn now to a third major danger of war. It is a danger which arises from the vast political transition which is taking place in Asia and Africa. On those continents, one-third of mankind is on the move. These peoples have moved or are moving from colonial systems into a status of independent national life. They are impelled by the same urge to freedom and to better conditions of life that has inspired many others since the American Revolution in the 18th Century.

This country can only sympathize with the motives which underlie this urge to change in the Afro-Asian world. To do otherwise would be to deny our noblest political beliefs and traditions.

When that has been said, however, we must also recognize that the vastness and the rapidity of the transition, creates major problems for the maintenance of peace. As we have seen in the recent Suez and Middle Eastern crises, this transition can involve bloodshed and it can bring the nations of the world close to major war. It can, as we have seen in the case of China, create aggression. Unless the transition to political independence is coupled with economic progress and the growth of responsible governments it can lead to disillusionment with freedom and to the rise of new totalitarianisms.

A foreign policy for peace must be acutely aware of these possibilities in the colonial transition. It must act to encourage the strengthening of the forces of freedom in the newly independent countries and their peaceful economic

progress. It must not, however, produce an unending dependence on this country or an irresponsibility or an arrogance in the leadership of these new nations.

The Point Four program of technical cooperation has done much to help the peoples of the newly independent nations in an appropriate fashion. It has assisted them in acquiring the skills necessary to promote public health, education and other basic and essential services of modern life. I have seen this people-to-people undertaking in operation in many countries. The men and women who are engaged in Point 4 work, the teachers, the public health specialists, the county agents, are performing an outstanding service to humanity and, in the process, are doing a great deal to promote an understanding and an appreciation of the finest qualities of our national life. However, I have also seen other types of foreign aid, often excessive and ill-advised military and economic aid that has been wasteful and harmful. It was for that reason that last year I suggested a full investigation of foreign aid by the Senate. That investigation has now been completed and I believe we have the facts which will enable us to separate the necessary from the superfluous, the wheat from the chaff, in foreign aid in the future.

If I may summarize, then, a foreign policy for peace has to deal with three principal dangers of war: the threat of aggression from the Soviet totalitarian system, the tendency towards disunity in Western Europe and the difficulties of the transition to freedom in Asia and Africa.

There are ways, as I have tried to indicate, in which we may cope with these dangers. We can stand firm with others against the threat of aggression from Soviet sources while we bend every effort to reduce by negotiation the perils which modern warfare and weapons pose for all humanity. We can do what we are able to do, to encourage the greater unity of the free nations of Europe and the Western world. We can help to guide the progress of the

newly-independent nations into channels of freedom, responsibility and economic progress.

We have no choice but to face the fact that all of these efforts require money. Let us, however, bear this in mind. It costs about \$200 million a year to run the Department of State, the agency charged with primary responsibility for peace. It costs over \$40 billion a year to run the Department of Defense, the agency charged with primary responsibility for defending the nation in war. Further, most of the foreign aid we now provide supplements these expenditures for defense. If there is to be a major reduction in the price of government, in taxes, therefore it will be brought about only by an effective foreign policy that reduces the danger of war and the cost of defense against war.

Let me make this one final point clear. Money is not a guarantor of the success of a foreign policy for peace. Peace cannot be bought. Money is not a substitute for an intelligent understanding of the international problems we face. It is not a substitute for wise leadership in dealing with these problems. Least of all is it a substitute for an essential human compassion and for an essential human courage. Least of all, is it a substitute for the faith and the determination that what must be done can be done to keep a decent peace in the world so that this nation may live and prosper in peace.